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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4526  
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0356  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4781  
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0324  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9894  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2767  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4179  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9930  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0240  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0186  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0300  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0023  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1201  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1852  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001692

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2016  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT WILLING TO SUPPORT SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE  
TO BHUTANESE REFUGEES

REF: A. SECSTATE 100743

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1434

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) On June 23, the Ambassador discussed with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy PM K.P. Oli the seven-nation core group's preparations for a July 14 meeting in New York on Bhutanese refugees (ref A). Oli conveyed the willingness of the Government of Nepal (GON) to accept repatriation, third-country resettlement, or any solution the refugees themselves would accept. He lamented, however, that the Bhutanese Foreign Minister did not seem keen to resolve the refugee situation anytime soon. Oli had also recently signed and sent a memo to the Home Ministry requesting travel documents be issued to vulnerable Bhutanese and to unspecified Tibetan refugees. On June 27, the Ambassador pressed Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula both to allow vulnerable Bhutanese refugees to travel and to allow UNHCR to conduct a census. According to a Bhutanese refugee leader and to a news report, Maoist activity is on the rise in some of the refugee camps. End Summary.

FOREIGN MINISTER SUPPORTS SOLUTION THAT REFUGEES WILL ALSO ACCEPT...  
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[1](#)2. (C) During his June 23 meeting with K.P. Oli, the Ambassador said the USG planned to continue urging the Government of India (GOI) to pressure the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) to repatriate at least some refugees in order to start the process and increase the possibility of resettlement as a durable solution. The Ambassador added

that, if GOI pressure was unsuccessful, the international community would have to look at other options to resolve the Bhutanese refugee issue. He acknowledged GON fears of a future expulsion of ethnic Nepalis by the RGOB and suggested that one way to lessen the possibility of that occurring could be for the international community to openly criticize the 1991 expulsions by the RGOB as ethnic cleansing. Another option could be to seek a guarantee from the GOI that New Delhi would not allow future expulsions by the RGOB of ethnic Nepalese still in Bhutan.

13. (C) Oli stressed that the GON was willing to accept repatriation or third-country resettlement, or "whatever the refugees were willing to accept" as solutions. Oli's only concern was whether resettlement meant that only the most educated 5-10,000 refugees would be resettled, leaving the uneducated/unemployed masses in the camps. The Ambassador assured Oli that resettling would be done methodically with a cross section of all refugees. The Ambassador noted that the USG was willing to resettle as many as 70,000 refugees; Canada had agreed to take 5,000, and Australia some thousand. He explained that if the U.S. resettled 70,000 refugees, that alone would empty nearly all the camps. Oli suggested that if resettlement were done it would perhaps be best if each resettlement country took all the refugees from a particular camp.

...BUT BHUTANESE FOREIGN MINISTER NOT RESPONSIVE  
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14. (C) Oli explained that in his May 29 meeting in Kuala Lumpur with Bhutanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Khandu Wangchuk (ref B), he had suggested that the two countries cease all diplomatic talk, which had only resulted in a 15-year stalemate, and create a "fresh start." He told Wangchuk the problem was between the citizens of Bhutan and the RGOB. He added that the RGOB should repatriate all refugees who were willing to return to Bhutan. Oli lamented that Wangchuk was not responsive to this suggestion.

OLI HESITATES ABOUT CENSUS  
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15. (C) On the need for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to conduct a census of the refugee camps, Oli expressed his displeasure about a recent article by UNHCR Country Representative Abraham Abraham, which was critical of the GON's role in the refugee problem. The Ambassador assured him that a census would be done in such a way as not to upset the refugees. During a June 27 meeting, the Ambassador also urged Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula to allow UNHCR to conduct its census. The Ambassador noted that the census would help determine who was in the camps and prevent a resettlement program from being a magnet to attract other Bhutanese. Home Secretary Umesh Prasad Mainali said that the Home Ministry needed to check with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS COULD BE ISSUED SOON FOR VULNERABLE CASES  
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16. (C) The Ambassador (again) pressed both FM Oli and Home Minister Sitaula to allow the extremely vulnerable cases of Bhutanese refugees to travel. Foreign Minister Oli told the Ambassador he thought he had already signed a letter requesting from the Home Ministry exit permission for the 16 extremely vulnerable cases in need of third-country resettlement. On June 26, Raja Ram Bartaula from the Americas' Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that Oli had recently signed and sent to the Home Ministry a "comprehensive" decision memo requesting the Home Ministry to issue travel documents to the 16 vulnerable Bhutanese, as well as to Tibetans. While unclear about which other populations of Bhutanese or Tibetans could benefit from the memo, Bartaula suggested that the Home Ministry "would not delay" in issuing travel documents. On June 27, Home Ministry officials told us that they were not aware of the MFA decision memo. Kabi Raj Khanal, Deputy Coordinator for

Refugee Affairs in the Home Ministry, noted, however, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Home Ministry planned to meet on June 30 or July 3 to discuss refugee issues. Khanal confirmed that the GON had yet to issue any travel documents for third-country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees.

#### MAOIST ACTIVITY IN CAMPS?

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17. (C) On June 22, Bhutanese Refugee leader Ratan Gazmere expressed to Emboff his concern that Maoists were infiltrating the refugee camps. He speculated that there could be weapons in some of the camps now, which could be problematic in light of growing tension and restlessness in the camps. Home Secretary Mainali also said he had heard reports of some weapons in the camps. A June 24 news report claimed that thousands of refugees in the Goldhap refugee camp held peaceful demonstrations and marched around the camp chanting slogans against the Bhutanese Monarchy.

#### COMMENT

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18. (C) The Foreign Minister's movement on the vulnerable Bhutanese is promising; the Home Ministry also appears open to following up. In each of our meetings, the Foreign Minister seems to come closer to accepting resettlement as a viable option. The problem, however, remains GON fear of possible future expulsions of ethnic Nepalis from Bhutan -- and the RGOB's lack of willingness to help resolve this 15-year old problem. GOI involvement and pressure on Bhutan could help spur movement.

MORIARTY